

Budget Presentation to the Board of Finance
Wednesday, March 25, 2009
East Windsor High School
7:30pm

Meeting called to order at 7:33pm by Chairwoman DeSousa

Board of Finance Members Present: Marie DeSousa, Jason Bowsza, Jack Manette, Kathy Pippin, Adam Mehan, Al Floyd, Bob Little
Members absent: Joanne Kubic

Board of Selectman Members Present: Denise Menard, Dale Nelson, Mark Simmons

Chairwoman DeSousa made opening comments and slight adjustments to the itinerary for the evening.

Parks and Recreation

Melissa Green, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented the budget of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Ms. Green pointed first to a significant drop in the department's bottom line. This is due largely to the removal of a full time groundskeeper in the department's budget, and that position reassigned to the Department of Public Works.

Ms. Green noted that the commission has tried to continue to provide services and maintain infrastructure with the budget that they have to work with, and she believes that they have been largely successful in achieving those goals.

Mr. Simmons asked if the commission had considered any fee increases. Ms. Green responded that there has been no decision as of yet regarding fee increases, but did state that the commission is slated to discuss it in greater detail during their April meeting.

Ms. DeSousa asked about league fees, which Ms. Green state would also be addressed during the April meeting. Ms. Green did point out that the fees currently charged for league play are comparable to surrounding communities.

Ms. Green also reported that she has in the past and will continue to pursue grant opportunities on behalf of the town. She is also happy to report that interest in programs offered by the Parks and Recreation department continues to grow.

Mr. Manette noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission came in under budget, even without including the personnel transfer to Public Works.

Information Technology

Mr. DeRegan, Director of Information Technology, presented the Information Technology budget. He was joined by David Rajala, a department employee.

Mr. DeRegan reported that the budget for ITS remains the same from last year. He did note that service contracts have been removed from IT and put into the budgets of each individual department. This follows the model used by the school district. By following this model, it allows a cost for specialized software and maintenance to be designated to each individual department.

Ms. DeSousa pointed out that the Board of Finance had intentionally combined this accounts several years ago. Mr. DeRegan responded that this in no way indicated that the ITS Department is not in constant contact with each department.

Mr. Rajala noted that town departments each use very unique software, adding efficiency to said departments.

Mr. Manette thinks that this is purely a debate about best accounting practices. Ms. DeSousa agreed, stating that it is something the Board could reexamine during budget workshops.

Ms. Menard noted that she had also been unaware of the thought process of the Board of Finance on this issue, but agreed that streamlining shared services made sense.

Mr. DeRegan reviewed several of accomplishments of his department over the last year, excluding Board of Education projects. Protection and maintenance of technology leads to greater efficiency.

Registrars of Voters

Marilyn Rajala (D) and Linda Sinsigallo (R) presented the budget request from the Registrars of Voters.

Ms. Sinsigallo presented a budget that is the same as last year. Additionally, she distributed an attachment reflecting election costs (including but not limited to the cost of printing ballots for the new voting machines, etc.)

Ms. DeSousa asked if legislation had been introduced to the Connecticut General Assembly to address the cost incurred by towns to print ballots. Ms. Sinsigallo stated that there had been legislation introduced, but that the resolution was still pending as the legislature was still in session.

Ms. DeSousa asked if buying food for Election Day workers was required by statute, to which Ms. Sinsigallo reported that it was not a statutory requirement, but that it was past practice.

Ms. DeSousa asked what was covered in the publication cost line of the Registrars' budget. Ms. Sinsigallo noted that it was to cover the cost of advertising, and Ms. Rajala added that it was also to purchase and program memory cards used to store balloting data. Ms. Rajala also noted that part of the initial cost was covered by the state.

Ms. DeSousa recommended to the registrars that they consider hiring fewer poll workers to work Election Day. Ms. Sinsigallo reported that they had already reduced the number of Election Day workers that were hired, with the exception of presidential elections, as they generally have a much higher turnout than other elections or referenda.

Ms. DeSousa asked about the cost incurred to the town to print the ballots, and Ms. Sinsigallo noted that there must be one ballot available per registered voter, as is required by statute.

Building Department

Rand Stanley, Town Builder, presented the budget for the Building Department

Mr. Stanley distributed a revised budget to members, noting that his department came in at 1% below last year's budget. Mr. Stanley also outlined calls made into his office, licensing updates, miles traveled, etc.

Mr. Stanley reported that salaries account for over 90% of his departmental budget, leaving only about \$12,600 annually for everything else. That equates to roughly \$6.92 per hour, excluding salaries.

Mr. Stanley noted that since 2003/2004, the Building Department has been at least \$103,000 over budget, generating revenue for the town. His conservative estimate for the coming year is about \$210,000. Ms. DeSousa asked at what point the Board of Finance could expect more solid estimates for revenue from the Building Department. Mr. Stanley noted that activity has started to pick up among builders, and, at the request of Ms. DeSousa, he agreed to give updated revenue estimates in one month.

Tax Assessor

Carol Madore, town Tax Assessor, and James Lenegan, Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals, presented the budgets for the Tax Assessor's office and the Z.B.A.

Ms. Madore noted an overall budget increase of \$12,000 from last years budget.

Ms. DeSousa asked why there had been an increase in purchased services. Ms. Madore stated that that is the reallocation of information technology budgeting.

Mr. Lenegan presented a budget that showed no increase over last year, and noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals was likely to return money to the town again this year.

Economic Development Commission

Eric Moffett (Chair), Rich Covill (Vice Chair), Josh Capelner and Jim Richards presented their budget for the Economic Development Commission

Mr. Moffett stated that the Economic Development Commission was committed to helping the town grow, and so they are asking for the same budget as last year. They are a volunteer commission, but they do rely heavily on their membership in the Metro

Hartford Alliance. They are currently working on a strategic plan to help the town move forward. Mr. Covill stated that the commission wants to maintain what is currently available to citizens

Mr. Manette asked what the purchased services line was in their proposed budget. Mr. Moffett answered that it is the membership dues owed by the town to Metro Hartford Alliance. Mr. Moffett explained what the town gets for the membership dues. He also noted that the conferences and training line in their current budget has been frozen at the direction of the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Richards noted that the Economic Development Commission has tried to network with communities in the greater Bradley Airport area, since that is the principle market of the town. Mr. Covill also noted that the commission has been focusing primarily on free advertising, rather than spending town dollars. Ms. Menard praised the efforts of the commission to promote the town at little or no cost.

Mr. Richards also noted that businesses in East Windsor are starting to network on their own and through the Economic Development Commission.

Town Planner' Office

Laurie Whitten, Town Planner, presented the budget for the Planner's office

Ms. Whitten noted that her budget realizes \$5,000 in savings in legal ads by using the Hartford Courant instead of the Journal Inquirer. The Planner's office also realized savings through the hire of a new staff person at a lower rate than the former. All considered, the Planner's budget shows a 3.96% reduction from last year.

Ms. Whitten estimates a revenue projection of about \$13,000, or nearly \$15,000 less than the previous year. She is working of a fee schedule update, which will generate additional revenue. Mr. Bowsza noted that the revenue from this year was nearly \$13,000 over what had been anticipated.

Ms. Whitten also presented the Planning and Zoning Commission's budget, which was the same budget as last year. She did note that members of the commission need to be encouraged to attend training sessions.

Lastly, Ms. Whitten presented the budget for the Conservation Commission. She reported a \$50 decrease from last year's budget.

Senior Center

Laura Clynch presented the budget for the Senior Center

Ms. Clynch noted that \$5,000 was not enough to run and maintain 5 vehicles. She has three (3) drivers on the road, with two (2) vehicles on standby in a rotation, spreading the wear and tear between the five vehicles. She noted that each van must be maintained every 3,000 miles, and that two of the vans are still leased and can be purchased at fair

market value. The dial-a-ride program received about \$10,000 in revenue that was not seen in their revenue projections. Mr. Manette asked if vehicle maintenance had been contracted on a town basis.

Ms. Clynch outlined services provided by the senior center over the course of the year. She noted that the senior center is well established and a local institution.

Federal and state programs subsidize the nutrition programs the offer free and reduced cost meals on wheels to seniors.

Ms. Nelson asked if there was a set schedule of events sponsored by the senior center, which Ms. Clynch pointed out in the packets. Ms. Clynch also explained that an active senior center is a draw for new prospective residents.

Ms. DeSousa asked if there was a set age requirement to participate in center activities. Ms. Clynch explained that there was an age requirement of 60 years old, and that the set age was set by federal funding guidelines.

Ms. Clynch finished her presentation by reading a thank you letter from someone who uses the senior center services on a regular basis.

Public Works

Lenny Norton presented the budget on behalf of the Public Works Department

Mr. Norton began his presentation by noting that his department's employees had agreed to take a pay freeze for one year, extending their current contract by one year. Ms. DeSousa and Mr. Manette were concerned about pending furloughs.

Mr. Norton explained the details of his proposal, as well as highlighting the funding lines that are being transferred from Parks and Recreation to the Department of Public Works.

He is also trying to sell several pieces of equipment that serve little or no function to Public Works, which will generate some small revenue.

Human Services

Elizabeth Burns presented the budget for the Human Services department.

Ms. Burns stated that energy programs are not completed for the current fiscal year. She also noted that call volume into her office has been very high for the year. She clarified several other highly used programs.

Mr. Manette asked if travel reimbursements had been reported on schedule, to which Ms. Burns stated that they had not been, and that her practice has never been to submit them on time. Her perspective is that if she gets reimbursed, she gets reimbursed. If not, that's fine too.

Mr. Little asked how many back to school backpacks the Human Services department was requested to fill last year, to which Ms. Burns answered more than 130.

Mr. Bowsza asked if the \$15,500 contribution made by the town for General Aid was sufficient to meet the needs of the community. Ms. Burns explained that she uses any resource available before using the town funds. She also reported that she would need nearly limitless resources to fix all of the issues faced by residents, but that she uses many different approaches to get the job done within the means allotted to her department.

Selectmen's Budget

Denise Menard, First Selectman, presented the budgets of several smaller departments.

Ms. Menard started with the 8430 line (communications) which showed no increase from the previous year due to renegotiation of service contracts.

The 8440 line (historical commission) saw a reduction of \$800 from the previous year.

Line 6310 is a small amount of money set aside to purchase flags for the Memorial Day parade.

Line 1145 had slight increases in Capitol Region Council of Governments and Greater Hartford Transit District membership dues, which are computed on a per capita basis.

Mr. Manette noted that the membership dues for the Metro Hartford Alliance should be removed from the Economic Development Commission's budget, and placed in line 1145-7-798-1005.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Bowsza, seconded by Mr. Floyd.

Meeting adjourned at 10:12pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Jason Bowsza
Board of Finance Member